

Harkin: Omnibus Agreement Funds Vital Mental Health Support

"Improving our mental health system requires a multi-pronged approach to funding, directed towards services in our communities and in schools, training of new providers, and to programs with a proven track record on prevention and early identifications. The investments made in the omnibus will significantly expand access to mental health support in our country." – Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA)

On Thursday, January 16, 2014, the U.S. Senate approved H.R. 3547, the omnibus spending package. The package included vital funding for mental health, included by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), as Chairman of the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittee. This funding corresponds with Harkin's work as chair of the Senate's HELP Committee, where he played a leading role in crafting the bipartisan [Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act](#).

Among the highlights of Chairman Harkin's efforts to increase resources for mental health in the FY 2014 omnibus:

Positive School Environments – The bill includes \$140 million, an increase of \$29 million, for activities that support positive school environments. Funds may be used to develop or upgrade emergency management plans, create positive school climates and address issues of pervasive violence in some of our communities. Safe, positive school environments can help reduce unhealthy student behavior, increase academic achievement, and counter the effects that violence can have on students.

Mental Health -- The agreement includes \$1.13 billion for mental health programs across the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), an increase of \$213 million. The bill provides \$115 million for the 'Now is the Time' violence prevention initiative:

- Mental health first aid grants, allowing teachers to reach 750,000 students with the goal of recognizing those with mental illness early and referring them to treatment;
- 20 grants to State Education Authorities (SEAs) to promote comprehensive programs in 1,000-1,500 schools to get students with mental health issues referred to needed services;
- Mental health workforce training which will add an estimated 4,375 social workers, psychologists, therapists and other mental health professionals to the behavioral health workforce; and
- \$20 million for programs targeting young adults at high risk of mental illness.

The omnibus also provides a \$47 million increase for the Mental Health Block Grant, along with a new set-aside for early intervention programs for those with serious mental illness such as psychosis.

The Omnibus contains the following items in the **SAMHSA section**, which are also in the [Mental Health Awareness and Improvement Act](#):

- \$15 million for mental health first aid training grants – *the first time this program has been funded*.
- \$46 million for the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative.
- *Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act suicide prevention programs.*
 - \$29.7 million in grants to states.
 - \$5 million for campus grants.
 - \$5 million for the suicide prevention resource center.

The omnibus agreement also includes \$11.2 million for the National Violent Death Reporting System at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information on Senator Harkin's initiatives, visit <http://harkin.senate.gov/>, or follow him on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/tomharkin> and Twitter <https://twitter.com/SenatorHarkin>.